

"COROLLARY"

-by-

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## "C O R O L L A R Y"

(Corollary-1.A deduction, consequence or additional inference, from a proved proposition. 2.Something that naturally follows; a result.

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary)

By Hughes Allison

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JOE HILL SHOULD HAVE been assigned to the case three months before its more bold principals accidentally tangled with a radio patrol car and were arrested that Wednesday morning. There was that slight chance he could have aborted its odious corollary.

At its birth the case yielded an angle, a general description of one of its five publicised characters, which was a sufficient reason to have used him in the initial investigation. Moreover, in all the subsequent stories the witnesses to the long series of crimes related at Headquarters in Oldhaven (total population 500,000; an industrial community less than an hour's motor-car trip to Manhattan), that same identification factor was mentioned again and again. No matter. Joe Hill was not assigned to the case until time was unfavorably late. Meanwhile, a pernicious web--fashioned out of mutilation, lethal terror, indecision and irony --had begun to coil itself around four human beings: the elderly stupid pair of grandparents, the alert but inexperienced little child, and a most sincere though too-exacting teacher.

Central Bureau partisans, inextricably wrapped up in politics at Headquarters, blamed the assignment's delinquency on the Bandit and Homicide Squads. The case originated as a job for the Bandit and Auto Squads. Later developments plunged Homicide's specialists into the search for the five men the Metropolitan newspapers called the "Bandit Quintet." It was common knowledge that Bandit and Homicide prima donnas just didn't like to mix with CB detectives during the early stages of widely publicised robbery-murder investigations, alleging that the CB men were ranc opportunists who took credit for work other men did, profiting in terms of personal prestige, better ratings and higher pay.

This accusation was not without foundation. The men attached to the Central Bureau--an all-purpose coordinating unit which worked directly out of Chief Richard Belden's own office--were frequently in a position to practice opportunism. Some had. And of course they had to defend themselves against the engendered criticism. When Joe Hill wasn't immediately assigned to the Quintet case, it was no trouble at all for certain CB boys to whisper that he was the victim of a Headquarters plot. CB extremists even went so far as to charge that "Bandit-Homicide Squad interests" had "captured and imprisoned" Chief Belden and Inspector Duffy.

Joe Hill was a CB man. However, it wasn't this affiliation that delayed his connection with the Quintet affair. As a matter of fact, he had worked in prior cases with his outfit's critics without creating friction. And Chief Belden and Inspector Duffy had excellent reason to believe that he could and would repeat the performance. Nevertheless, postponement of the assignment did result because of a bias, but its nature was far more reprehensible than the rather ornery inter-departmental prejudice at Head-

quarters.

The said obliquity lacked a concrete name to distinguish it from specific evils, such as arson and incest, although its influence was as expansive as the air. Yet, conveniently enough, it accomplished all of its endless and perverse machinations under the cover of the cutest of all misnomers, "social problem"

Whenever its many thousands of victims pressed it to change its ways, the astute and wily bigot escaped real reform by reducing improvement to the size of a mere token. In Oldhaven (where 80,000 such victims lived), there was a crying need for a considerable number of detectives like Joe Hill. But, curiously, Joe was the only one of a kind at Headquarters.

While Joe was ably qualified to handle his share of work as a detective, ever so often the incidence of crime simply ignored the fact of his singular position. The advent of the Quintet matter occurred during a period when Joe was hard at work on several other important cases. And, Central Bureau chauvinists to the contrary, Chief Belden and Inspector Duffy just didn't think it wise to take him off the old cases and put him on the new one. Not immediately. Unfortunately, the delay wantonly killed Joe's very slim chance to abort the Quintet case's related criminal sequence. In fact, by the time he discovered the existence of that opportunity, it was not only dead: it was buried--buried deep under an ugly mound of senseless bigotry and ignominious tokenism.

His connection with the case, when it happened, came about as a result of routine procedure--Central Bureau men always collaborated with the other Headquarters units in processing apprehended robbery-murder suspects for arraignment and transfer to the Prosecutor's Office.

CHIEF BELDEN AND INSPECTOR Duffy summoned Joe to the Chief's third floor office late Wednesday afternoon, a few hours after the arrests had been announced in the public press.

Belden, seated behind his desk, was in the very best of high humor. "Huh!" he growled. "One guess! What's in the cell block?"

Joe grinned; said, "The cure for a three months headache"

"Right! But they're punks," Belden declared. "I've had a good look at 'em. And only one thing the papers ever said about this crew--really fits"

"What's that, Chief?" Joe asked.

"That handle--'Bandit Quintet'"

"The Chief means," Inspector Duffy explained, "we've caught ourselves five yellow jerks with a yen to sing"

Joe said, "With or without persuasion?"

"Without," Duffy replied. "And plenty loud, in a good key, for as long as we want"

Belden said, "I've been a cop a long time. So I've seen lots of talkers. I don't pretend to know what makes 'em do it. But I do know how to handle 'em. Treat 'em easy, take your time, let 'em spout--and comb every bit of what comes out for leads"

"That's the play all the way," Duffy agreed.

"Not a one of this Quintet crowd seems to have a previous record," the Chief said. "That may be why our stools failed to produce. But just the same. Dig--easy and gently--for crook connections. You can't ever tell. Lots of cases are wide open. Joe, you draw the chauffeur. Says his name is Albert Johnson. Claims he's a powerful church-going fellow. Still, he--. Watch him, huh?"

"I'll watch him," Joe promised.

Duffy said, "How about the men to work along with Hill, Chief?"

One of the telephones on Belden's desk jangled.

"Give him some boys with lots of Middle Ward experience," Belden said. Picking up the 'phone, he growled, "Yes?"

In an aside to Joe, Duffy said, "Make it Shaw from Homicide, Carlton from Bandit,--"

Chuckling at the 'phone Belden told it, "By all means give him a line"

"--Swenson from Auto,--", Duffy continued.

"Well!" Belden exclaimed at the 'phone. "Hello, Mr. Prosecutor"

"--and Goldberg from Identification," Duffy concluded, matching the grin he saw on Belden's face.

"You're happy?" Belden said to the 'phone. "Huh! Over here-- we're using the moon for a chair! Yes sir! And right this minute Detective Hill's on his way for a cell block session with their chauffeur"

Joe looked at Duffy.

"Take a peep at all five of 'em," the Inspector told him. "Skip the murders. Just touch your man for the over-all number of stick-ups. Then come back here. Hmmn--no rush to arraign 'em"

As Joe left the office, Belden's joy in the 'phone conversation with the Prosecutor was approaching full bloom.

JOE HAD SEEN THE SAME KIND OF SCARED, repentent men before. They were in separate cells. Four of them were pale-faced non-entities who stared at him, as he slowly walked past their barred cages, out of solemn eyes that silently begged for clemency and pity. The fifth man--the chauffeur--was exactly like his confederates. Except that his skin was black.

Motioning him close to the bars, Joe said, "I'm Detective Hill!" A trace of surprise found a path through the worry, shame and fear etched in the ebony face.

"I knowed," the chauffeur said, "a few of our folks in Oldhaven was cops. But I thought they was all just street cops!"

Joe said, "They tell me you're in a little trouble, Johnson!"

The man nodded. "What's gonna happen to me?"

Joe shrugged--noncommittally. "What did you do?"

"Th' Chief--he come to see me. I said I'd talk!"

"Chief Belden's not a bad fellow to talk to!"

"I seen you--now. You mostly likely to--"

"Hmnn-huh?"

"Well, our people is always so far behind. I was just trying to--to catch up a little bit!"

"No regular work?"

"I had been chauffeuring for a rich woman--named Mrs. Stevens!"

"The pay?"

"The job--it was running out!"

"Oh!"

"And I met them other four!"

"Yes. The others!"

"You see--it was like this. Mrs. Stevens--she's a very old lady. She got sick. Before she let 'em take her to th' hospital, she said to me, 'Albert, you've been with me such a short time; I didn't make the same provisions for you. Because you're still young and healthy'. Well, that made me--"

Joe interrupted. "Ever pull a hold-up all by yourself?"

"Naw sir!" the chauffeur said. "Only with them other four!"

"How many times?"

"We done---lemme figure? Yeah. Twenty!"

"Twenty!"

"And I just driv th' car. That's all I done. Ever!"

Backing away from the bars, Joe said, "Eh Johnson?"

"Hmnn-huh?"

"Suppose I come back in--oh, a little while. Huh?"

He was following Duffy's order. The man was just as the Chief had described him: a talker. It would be a long, long time before his confessional jag wore off. Joe left the cell block.

WHEN HE REENTERED THE office, the Chief was still on the 'phone --still talking to the Prosecutor. But the recent good cheer had vanished. Belden was in a howling rage.

"Yes, I said th' damn punks would talk!" Belden was shouting. "But they've been on a three months stick-up spree. We wanna feel 'em over for leads. And how'n hell can we do it--if we rush 'em--pell mell!--into that alley-house office you run?!"

The Chief paused to listen to the Prosecutor's end of the controversy; looking at Joe, Duffy said:

"That Prosecutor's loaded with a tom cat's nerve. He's pushing us to arraign these five bums--like we'd jugged 'em for loitering!"

"Huh!" Belden yelled at the 'phone. "I don't have the men to do it that quick. What?! You just said Monday morning. Now you change it to Saturday morning--so they'll be in court by Monday!"

"He's crazy!" Duffy said.

"You're crazy!" Belden said. "But I'll do it! Now get th' hell off my line!" He jammed the 'phone in its cradle with a bang.

"Try to be nice to some people!" Duffy said. "Try it!"



"Lowell will do anything to be Governor!" Belden said. "He's after Headlines. No skin off his political beak if we mess up!"

Duffy said, "Well, we just got to try and deliv--"

"You listen!" Belden interrupted. "Try?! You do it. See? By Saturday morning too! I want the last scrap of information pumped out of every one of those bums. Understand?"

Duffy said, "Yes sir"

"And nobody on this job gets a wink of rest 'til it's wrapped up too!"

Duffy said, "Yes sir"

"You'll proceed from the first to the last stick-up. And--"

"In that order?" Duffy asked, interrupting.

"Huh! We're only the police!" Belden said. "Will a spread in Sunday's papers land us in the Governor's mansion?"

Duffy said, "Oh! Lowell wants it that way!"

"Yeah," Belden said. "That's the way he wants it!"

Looking at Joe, Duffy said, "How do you like that? Give you ten to one--he'll work his very best bet for the Middle Ward vote right smack in the center of this case!"

"A female Investigator too!" Belden snorted. "What's her name again?"

Joe said, "Mary Sweet!"

HOMICIDE'S SHAW, BANDIT'S CARLTON, Auto's Swenson and Identification's Goldberg--the men Inspector Duffy had named to work with Joe in connection with processing the Quintet's chauffeur for arraignment--were agreed that meeting the Prosecutor's deadline was one thing. It was another thing to harness themselves to such an arbitrary time-factor and still do an adequate job. Some important lead, they said, would certainly get lost in the

insane race to beat the exacting hands of the Prosecutor's watch. Four other crews--each a duplicate in unit composition and in its consensus of opinion--stood with Joe and his particular colleagues and listened grimly to Duffy's procedural instructions.

"Yes, you gotta finish this job by Saturday morning," the Inspector said. "And if you think you can skip being thorough think some more. See?! Comb every word these punks speak, run down every name, every place they mention. For leads. Lots of cases are still wide open in this crime-free land.

"At all times," he continued, "keep our five guests separated. Be informal. They'll cooperate; you be gentle, sympathetic. First, let 'em spill their guts for a while, a long while. Then ease 'em into handing you the date and location of their first robbery. Clear through me for confirmation, so the five crews of you will be in complete harmony about that point. Same procedure as to murder. Next, get the over-all number of the jobs they pulled together. Then work forward. Get the relevant, material details of each successive crime: hold-up and/or robbery-murder. Finish with the last stick-up. See?"

The Processing began at seven o'clock that Wednesday night.

The chauffeur insisted upon addressing himself to Joe, and most of the conversational load fell on Joe's tongue. During this stage of the game, no one pressed the man with pointed questions. As a result, he did considerable rambling in his narrative, naming personalities, mentioning places without the least respect for order, continuity and chronology.

Goldberg jotted down the chauffeur's more pertinent statements.

At 11 p. m., Joe went to Duffy, told him the man's recollection of the first robbery's date and location; adding, "He still maintains there were twenty jobs, all told"

"Those three points--date, location, total jobs--check?"

"Five murders. They occurred during the sixth, eighth, tenth, fifteenth and eighteenth robberies?"

"That checks. What about the car?" Duffy said.

"Just one. Belonged to his employer, Mrs. Stevens. She's in the Wildwood Hospital, an incurable, he says?"

"I'll check on her!"

Joe said, "Before each job he'd steal a set of license plates and substitute them for the set registered in the Stevens name?"

"Swenson from Auto will check that. The descriptions made him out a real chauffeur. After each job, the boys looked for him down in the Middle Ward. How come the boys missed him?"

"When Mrs. Stevens had to go to the hospital, she told him he might use a room in her apartment until the place was disposed of. After pulling a job, he'd hole-up there by himself?"

"Humm. Made-to-order hide-out. For him. What about his dough?"

"He says he put most of it in the Oldhaven Merchants' Bank?"

"Well! An original place to stash hold-up cash. Check the bank first thing in the morning. Where'd he spend the rest of it?"

"Says he gave some to his church?"

"Forget it. Where else?"

"Spent it on girls. Goldberg has their names. He says he'd pick 'em up in the Mattox Hotel- place run by a woman. Name's Big Rose?"

"Goldberg is Identification. I'll have him check the women for records and send Shaw to check the hotel. That's a Middle Ward dump, Joe. Too bad we couldn't spare you when this case first got going. Ten to one, you'd have done what the other boys' faces didn't let them do--pick up Johnson's trail. Maybe you'd have run into him there--at the Mattox--before all the killings started?"

Joe said, "I might have had that luck. Water over the dam now!"

"Yeah. I'm going to use Carlton to help round up witnesses. There'll be plenty of line-ups. Twenty robberies and five murders can do that. Sorry. No sleep for you. Go check his room in the Stevens place. Take a squad car. Collect his clothes!"

WHEN JOE RETURNED TO Headquarters, after carefully scrutinizing the Stevens apartment, he had the chauffeur identify the particular garments the man had worn during the commission of each of his crimes. Joe labeled each piece of that apparel with a date, time-notation, and a stated location. Next he turned his attention to a long stream of witnesses who arrived to view the Bandit Quintet in an intermittent series of line-ups. He went to Johnson's bank and had a good look at the fellow's rather handsome account, making careful notes on deposits and withdrawals.

Late Thursday afternoon, during a joint conference with the five processing detective contingents, Inspector Duffy said:

"Speed it up. Get 'em out there where the action occurred. Let 'em show you how they did it--in front of a camera. Tomorrow--that's Friday--and not a damn second later than four p. m., we got to let the Stenographers start taking down their formal statements. Move!"

Sleep had been a stranger to Joe Wednesday night. Sleep and Joe remained strangers Thursday night. He kept himself going with cigarettes, sandwiches, and lots of black coffee.

Friday afternoon, at ten minutes to four o'clock, he marched up to Duffy; said, "We have the details and the photographed 'reenactments' of Johnson's part in nineteen successive crimes!"

"Well?" Duffy said, frowning.

"We didn't have time to run him through job number 'twenty'."

Duffy grinned; said, "Okay. The case's yours!"

"Huh?"

"What the Prosecutor really wants--is the details on the five killings. He'll pick the easiest and juiciest murder, schedule it for trial--quick. and grab off lots of space in the papers. He's after Headlines. A couple of our crews had to cram, skip--to get in the murders. They're three and four jobs short!"

"I expected the dunce cap!"

"Naw. You and your boys just trot Johnson through the nineteen jobs you've got spread-out nice and pretty. That'll give him plenty of practice. Enough to sing you the whole tune to that last stick-up by ear. The Prosecutor ain't worrying about what we might miss. It's nearly four o'clock. Get going, Joe!"

Each processing detective-crew herded its own Quintet culprit up to the fourth floor of Headquarters and into an enormous, open, desk-strewn rectangular room whose facilities were officially the property of the rank and file members of the Homicide Squad. Four of the Quintets were placed, separately, in the big rectangle's corners. Joe, his crew, and a Stenographer gave Johnson a chair near a clutter of battered desks situated in the very middle of the room. The chauffeur began making his formal statement that Friday afternoon at precisely four o'clock.

It was a slow, tedious task: boring, unexciting. But it had to be done right. They started with the very first crime. Deleting extraneous matter as they went along, they retained as best they could the essential, relevant facts which were material to Johnson's own acts and words and such other acts and words as occurred or were spoken in his presence--leading to- and happening during the commission of the crime.

an original copy and a stack of carbons of the statement were taken off the typewriter. Goldberg read the content aloud to the chauffeur; the chauffeur read it aloud, signed the confession. Joe and his colleagues provided witnessing signatures, a notary's seal was affixed to the document; then the procedure began again in connection with crime number two.

It went on and on. The detectives and culprits alike drank coffee, chewed sandwiches, lit one cigarette from another. Mustfully, they toyed with the idea of climbing in a bed. Once, Inspector Duffy's voice roared:

"Chief Belien's at home. He just 'phoned me. He's been in constant contact with Prosecutor Lowell. They'll be arriving here at Headquarters in a little while. Speed it up. How far off is Saturday morning?!"

All of the lights in the big rectangular room were ablaze. The white glare gradually turned the working men's haggard eyes into dull ruby sources of pain in their heads. Joe and his crew finally disposed of Johnson's nineteenth statement.

HOMER'S SHAW SAID it was already Saturday morning, so Joe glanced at his wrist watch. It was one a. m.

Bandit's Carlton said, "I'm dead on my feet. Let's whiz this last one along, huh?"

"Yeah," Shaw said. "I'm convinced these boys stuck to their own business and just didn't mix with other crooks. They ain't handed us a single lead yet!"

Carlton said, "Joe, take a squint at that Wednesday's 'squeel sheet', go by it--and get this crap over with!"

Joe picked up a piece of paper, glanced at it, looked at the chauffeur; said, "Johnson, give us your last job's facts, huh?"

Johnson said, "Tuesday night, I stole a set of license plates. Then I went in a 'phone booth and called the poolroom where them white boys was at. On th' 'phone, we got a job set for next day!"

"Go on," Joe said.

"I went straight home," Johnson said, "and got in bed. Next morning--Wednesday--I got up at eight o'clock. I was by myself. I never took nobody to my room--'cause ol' Mrs. Stevens trusted me. Once, her lawyer--Mr. Colbax Todd--wrote a 'portant paper for her. She told me what was in it, asked me to put my name on it. So she musta trusted me. And I--"

Joe interrupted. Inrelevancies were creeping in. "You got up at eight a. m."

Johnson said, "That paper never took care of me--but it did them others. So I let them white boys talk me into--"

Joe interrupted again. "You got up at eight o'clock!"

"All that," Johnson said, "was before Mrs. Stevens let 'em take her to th' hospital!"

"Aw cut th' back-tracking!" Shaw said. "What th' hell did you do Wednesday, after eight a. m.?"

"I fixed a meal," Johnson said, "and ate it. I was feeling nervous. So I went and got th' car and driv to th' Middle Ward!"

"Take time out there to talk to anybody?" Joe asked.

"I seen Prophet Hamid. He was right in front of his temple on Nickle Street. I knowed him. So when he called me, I stopped th' car. He asked me would I go and git an ol' man by th' name of Tom Turner. And I said yes. I went!"

"Anybody go with you?" Joe said.

"I was by myself!"

"Where does Turner live?"

"On Jenkins Place. I don't know th' number. I just knows th' house. I driv there. Ol' man Turner was just coming out his front door. I driv him to th' Prophet's temple. I never got out. I driv on to Oldhaven Park"

Joe said, "What did you do there--in th' Park?"

"What I always done--switched license plates on th' car"

"So on?"

"Then I driv to Commerce Square. A loan shop we was going to rob was there. I parked a block off and waited. Them four white boys walked past where I was parked at. They went in th' loan shop. In a few minutes they run out, jumped in the car, and I driv it off. A block away we run into a radio car with two cops in it. They was awful mad at us for hitting 'em. They found out we was robbers too. So they 'rested all five of us"

Joe said, "And it was precisely eleven a. m. Is that all?"

Johnson said, "That's all"

"Just who is Tom Turner?" Joe asked.

"He's a very ol' man what used to go to th' church where I goes at"

Shaw said, "What about Prophet Hamid?"

"Him?" Johnson said. "Everybody down in th' Middle Ward knows him. I seen him 'round lots"

"In the Mattox--for instance?" Shaw asked. "With Big Rose?"

"Yeah. He make lak he know what you thinking 'bout. I give him plenty chances to tell me my mind. He's just a lot of big mouf"

Shaw said, "Joe, I guess we can wrap it up now. I'll call Duffy" He did.

Duffy said, "You fellows through?"



"Cept for one thing," Johnson said.

"Yeah? What's that?" Duffy said.

"I b'lieves," Johnson replies, "I deserves a break--'cause I I just ain't what you can call 'bad'. Before I met a with them white boys, I had never been in no real trouble. Mr. Stevens-- she took very sick. She said to me, 'Albert, you'll need another job. Use the car to look for one if you like'. So I--"

Interrupting, Duffy said, "She didn't mean for you to use her car in twenty stick-ups and five murders!"

"I never done th' killings," the chauffeur said. "I just driv th' car. For them white boys. Before that I had a good record. Axt my pastor, Reverend G. J. Hall. Axt Mrs. Stevens!"

Duffy said, "She's comatose!"

"She's what?" Johnson said.

"In a coma. Unconscious," Duffy explained.

"Oh," Johnson said. "Well, I guess cancer do ol' women lak that. But Detective Hall--he know th' real thing what made me rob folks. And I think he should help me git a break!"

Duffy said, "Yeah. Hmmn-hun. Sure! Right now, you give him a break. Sign this last statement and let him go home. How about it?"

"Okay. Sure! Didn't I sign them other statements?"

AT TWO A. M., Joe got in an elevator. When he stepped out on the first floor, Chief Belden was standing there waiting to go up.

"The arraignment is set for one p. m., Monday," Belden said.

"You look busted up. So don't come in until noon, Monday!"

Joe wearily stumbled out to the sidewalk in front of Headquarters and cursed the absence of the cab he needed.

A coupé turned a corner, stopped at the curb where he was stand-

ing; a young woman, whose sixty-seven inches of elegant figure was clad in a smart black and white costume that went well with glossy black hair and a honey-brown complexion, got out of the car.

Instead of addressing her by her name, Mary Sweet, Joe said, "Morning Counselor"

The woman had an academic and professional right to the title. nodding, she eyed him from head to foot. He was a big man: six feet one inch in height, with two hundred pounds of solid muscle appropriately strung along; an excellently developed frame. Ordinarily, his eyes were a shade of brown in complete consonance with the chestnut hue of his skin. But now his eyes were bloodshot and his face was a mat of unshaven black bristles.

The good-looking woman said, "Humm. You do look a pretty frezzle that chauffeur--what's his name?; Johnson?--is that to you?"

Joe grinned. "Blame it on your boss's ambition. Incidentally, when is he going to promote you from Investigator to trial assistant? A month before the next election?"

In the glow of the street-lamp's light, her teeth were even and white. "I'll let that crack go by the board just out of pity's sake. In fact, I pity you--your condition rather--so much, I'd run you home in my car if I had time. But work, you know--"

"Never mind," he told her. "I think I see a taxi coming, trailing a motorized caravan; your boss, Prosecutor Lowell, and the rest of his staff are aboard I guess. See you at the arraignment"

When he got in the cab, he told the driver, "The Wallace Thurman Houses, Unit Four--on the far side of the Middle Ward"

Falling away from the curb, the taxi-driver said, "What'd they have you down to Headquarters for, huh buddy?"

fire, on edge, Joe snatched a gold-plated shield out of his pocket, stuck it over the driver's shoulder and after a moment said, "Cap. General Burrell. See? I'm in a hurry."

The driver said, "I seen you mixing words with the dame back there. Swell looking colored fish. Hope she ain't your sister. 'Cause she oughta be easy for a guy like you to make. You a married man, buddy?"

"No," Joe said. "and that dame you saw me talking to--I'm a Prosecutor's Investigator." He leaned back to rest his head.

The taxi driver said, "This town ain't got near enough law-abiding colored people in it. You and her should oughta help us clean that up. Of course, the white people have a few bad ones too. But your little ward hoods! If they was down--"

The driver's tongue wagged on and on--like Tennyson's brook. Joe closed both his eyes and his ears, and kept them closed until the cab stopped with a jerk.

His tiny three-room apartment on the fourth floor of the model housing development was a welcome sight. After he'd had one look at himself in the bathroom mirror, he stumbled into the bedroom and collapsed across the bed without removing anything except his hat.

THE TELEPHONE AWAKENED HIM. He rolled over, reached for the jangling instrument; heard Chief Helden's voice say:

"Lad, Joe, my boy! This is a damn crime, and I should be eternally incarcerated for committing it. But you've got to come back to Headquarters. Right away!"

"Huh?!" Joe grunted. "What time is it?"

"Four A. A.," Belden replied. "I know you just left here. But—listen. An old fashioned school-teacher, named Middlesexton, brought a little colored kid down here just now. The kid says she don't trust white cops. Her teacher backs her up about that. If it wasn't for that teacher--wait'll you see her--we'd take the box away from the kid!"

Joe said, "Box?"

Belden said, "Yes. The kid has something in a box!"

Joe said, "There're ten other negro cops in Oldhaven!"

"This kid is too little to— Get down here, Joe!"

"Isn't Mary Sweet down there at Headquarters?"

"We tried that," Belden said. "And what did the kid say after just one look at Sweet? The kid said, 'Men are police; not women'. The teacher backed her up. Get th' hell down here, Detective Hill!"

"Yes sir," Joe said, adding, "as soon as I put on my hat!"

LOCK BROUGHT A CAB for Joe in ten minutes. He arrived at Headquarters at fifteen minutes to five that Saturday morning. He went directly to Chief Belden's office where he found quite an assemblage awaiting him.

Belden, his face pinker and more wrinkled than usual, was seated behind his desk. Inspector Duffy, his face freshly shaven and wearing a newly pressed suit, sat in a chair close to the edge of his superior's desk. Prosecutor Elwood Jowell and Prosecutor's Investigator Mary Sweet occupied chairs lined up with the wall on one side of the room.

Two more people were seated directly across the room. One was a little old lady, dressed in a style years and years out of date, whose chalk-white countenance was a combination of grim sternness and grim stubbornness. The other was a very small black girl. She

was shabbily clothed, but clean. Her eyes were big, round, packed with frank suspicion and jammed with naked fear. Her neck, trembling in her lap, clutched a package; it was about five inches long, three inches wide, two inches deep--wrapped in white paper, tied with a green string.

The little old lady favored Joe's rampliet clothes, bearded face and red eyes with a single glance; then reacted unfavorably.

The child looked at the little old lady; said, "He's colored. But is he a real policeman? He don't wear clothes lak none!"

"He doesn't wear clothes like one, June," the little old lady told the child.

"Yes ma'am," the child said. "Doesn't--like--one!"

Fixing a stern stare on Chief Belden's face, the little old lady said, "Chief Belden, is this the--the person we've been waiting for?"

Belden gulped, sputtering, "Er--madam--he--"

"Miss Middlesexton, please!"

"Yes ma'am. Miss Middlesexton," Belden said.

Duffy said, "Chief, for Miss Middlesexton's information--this person, as she calls him, has been at work--continuously--since Wednesday afternoon. He's had no time to shave or put on fresh, clean clothes!"

Recovering his composure, Belden said, "This man is Detective Hill, a member of my own personal organization, the Central Bureau. Further, ma'am, he's a graduate of a most reputable university!"

"Where he was an ace athlete," Duffy said. "In fact, we think he's a nicely balanced piece of mental and physical machinery!"

"Came into our Department," Belden continued, "at age twenty-two. That was a little over nine years ago. He spent seven and a half

of it in uniform walking a beat. For more than a year now he's been a detective here at Headquarters."

Turning to the child, Miss Middlesexton said, "June, I'm satisfied that this man is a real policeman. Tell him your story."

"Let's hear from you first," Belden told Miss Middlesexton. She said, "Oh. Yes. June--last name Jones--is a member of my second grade class in Public School Twenty. Early Friday morning she came to my desk and made an unusual request. She asked me to escort her to a policeman, adding that he must be--er colored, because she said--. Colored children in the Middle Ward are afraid of white policemen, Chief Belden."

Belden didn't comment. He said, "Go on, ma'am!"

"I know now," Miss Middlesexton said, "I was too exacting. I remembered that June told me why she needed a policeman."

"And she wouldn't talk," Duffy said.

"I didn't care to become involved in a trifling matter," Miss Middlesexton said.

"We got the picture," Belden said.

"At one o'clock this morning," the teacher said, "June rang the bell at my home at Fifty-four Wilson Avenue. She then--"

Belden interrupted. "Where does June live?"

The child said, "Sixty-eight Dawkins Place. Top floor. Rear flat."

Belden leaned forward. "Dawkins Place and Wilson Avenue are five miles apart. Miss Middlesexton, June is a mere child. How'd she know where you live? How'd she get there?"

"For the past thirty years," the teacher replied, "I've entertained my school charges at my home once a semester. Of course I always escort them. June attended the last party a month ago."

June looked at Joe; said, "I walked to where he lives at!"  
Miss Middlesexton said, "She walked to the front of the box  
she has in her lap. I--" Her cheeks white fire turned grey.

Bellen smiled at June. "Now, little girl, if you know the  
rest of us what you have in your box. Hmmm?"

The child looked at Joe.

He said, "Chief Bellen is a nice man. Good for my heart."

The child got out of her chair, sat on the floor, untied her  
package's green string, stripped off its white paper, and held up  
the underside so that Joe could see it.

Warily Joe sat down on the floor beside the child.

"Letters," he said, "apparently cut from newspapers are posted  
here and say: 'Talk only to the Lord's True Messenger!'"

Duffy got out of his chair; said, "She's got a ordinary  
match-box. Slide it open, kid!"

Snarling tears welled up in the child's eyes. She said, "The  
Tom never come home wednesday night. Nor Thursday night. Nor be-  
fore I slipped away from Ma Grace and--and--"

Miss Middlesexton said, "I understand that when June was an in-  
fant, her parents were killed in an automobile accident. She lives  
with her grandparents. They're her maternal grandparents."

Duffy said, "Come on kid. Open the box!"

The child glanced at Duffy, then looked at Joe.

Joe said, "He's a nice man too. Now let's see what's in the  
box!"

The child said, "There was another box--before this one. Me  
and Ma Grace found it Thursday morning laying on th' floor in th'  
hall--jes' outside th' door. It was jes' lak this one. It had th'  
same thing in it. Ma Grace acted real scared. 'Chile', she tole

"I don't want to tell anybody 'bout this!'. When I come back from school, a piece was 'gint on her bed. She was crying and saying to her to tell her what it is. Friday morning I found this here box. But I never told no one since I had tore found it--'s gone--'s all gone. Miss Middlesexton--she's white. But I trusts her. And I axted her to help me!"

Joe said, "Pa Tom. Tom. Dawkins Place"

"He by 'gint--" the child said. "And that's where I lives at!"

Miss Middlesexton said, "Her grandparents' name is Turner. Thomas and Grace Turner!"

Belden picked up one of the telephones on his desk and told it, "Hush this. Steer a prowl to sixty-eight Dawkins Place, top floor, rear flat. Investigate the absence of Thomas Turner!"

He cradled the 'phone.

Miss Middlesexton said, "Jane, you must--you must open it now!"

"Ye, no!" the child said. When he slit the box open.

Inspector Duffy said, "Good God!"

Belden said, "What is it, Joe?"

Joe said, "A finger. It's black. A piece of cotton is stuck on the spot where it was cut off of--"

And Belden, looking back at the child had burst into loud hysterical sobbing. All of his weariness seemed to evaporate. Anger began rising inside of him as if it were an increasing current of electricity. It heated his brain, stimulated it, made bits of images and word pictures flash through his mind. He stared right where he was--on the floor--and took the screaming little girl in his arms, cradled her there, looking with her from side to side.



Joe was only half-aware that Jerry Street had seated himself beside him on the floor and that he and Miss Bates were both talking to the child in a hush, trying to stifle women's voices and with the touch of their hands to quiet the girl's hysteria. He hardly noticed the routine fashion in which Belden had snatched the telephone from the Chief's desk--the man, photographer, finger-print men, a homicide squad lieutenant, and a detective sergeant who was an early morning duty. He gave practically all of his attention to putting the fragments of insurance photographs in the proper place in his trail so that he could examine the result for what he knew would be missing.

He heard Belden saying, "Joe! Joe. Snap out of it!"

He said, "Yes sir," and twisted his wrist so that he could see his watch. It was 5:45 a. m.

"This is your case, Joe," Belden said. "And it looks like a nasty one!"

"Yes sir," Joe said.

Belden said, "You better get a little rest before you--"

One of the telephones on the Chief's desk jangled.

Buffy said, "That ought to be the prowl car boys reporting from Dawkins Place?"

When Belden cradled the 'phone, he said, "The prowl fellows say they found another box outside the farmer's hall door. They looked in the box after they broke into the flat and found Grace Turner--she was a very old woman--a D-O-A!"

"A D-O-A," Miss Whifflesexton said. "What does that mean?"

Buffy glanced at the child whom Joe was still cradling in his arms. The little girl saw the look. She had waited long.

Dry-eyed, she said, "Do it mean that the Grace has been scared so--that she dead?"

"Gee--n! Dying that way--a little sooner, 'meant dead on arrival'!"  
The little old lady exclaimed. "Frightened me, for good."  
"Can't you do something about this? Find the--the--"

Joe said, "Just a minute now, ma'am!"

"Better take a little rest first, Joe," Duffy said.

Joe said, "Let me ask the child a few questions. I think I'm  
on to what it's all about!"

Belien said, "The investigation thing usually take a long  
time. But go ahead!"

Joe said, "June, where'd your grandparents work?"

"They worked a long time ago," the child said. "But not long--  
because of the government checks and my check that come from the  
state!"

"I think I know what she means," Mary Sweet said. "The grand-  
parents got old age pension checks. And June, herself, must be  
a so-called 'State Child'!"

June said, "Yes ma'am. The State--it pays for my keep. Because  
my father and mother--they dead!"

"That kind of money isn't big enough for a motive," Belien  
said. "It looks like a hate angle. The old folks probably have  
one--"

Joe interrupted. "June, where'd your grandparents work a long  
time ago?"

"Pa Tom--he driv th' carriage. Ma Grace--she done th' cooking.  
It was for a rich lady. Then she got a automobile. And she give  
a her big estate. And Pa Tom and Ma Grace--they was too old to  
do much more work. So then my father and mother--they chauffeured  
and cooked for--"

Joe said, "Ah! Now here we go! What was the rich lady's name?"

"I don't exactly know how many the child said. I. Tom and  
a. Grace--they got a lot of things. They were the only ones  
to get it. And he Tom--he said that at the very last minute  
folded the table. He wanted the table to be the only one  
there. And he said the automobile. That was how my father  
mother was killed--in the automobile one day. They were going  
where. And in Tom--said he never wanted to hear that name  
name called in front of his ears!"

Joe said, "Where do you go to church, June?"

"I still go to Reverend E. J. Ball's church. He was the  
Grace--they just going there. Only old people could go where they  
started going. And Reverend Ball--he used to come to the house  
lot and eat in the end. And he Grace to come back to his church. But  
at Tom--he said that all his life he had been going to Reverend  
Ball's kind of church and that no Christian kind of church was do-  
ing our people no good. Reverend Ball--he said something about a  
cult was going to help our people!"

Belden said, "Father Divine, huh?"

Joe said, "No. One of his imitators. The kind I'd like to work  
over a bit!"

Belden said, "I know how you feel. But we can't teach that kind  
of crook. You know that, Joe?"

"I wonder," Joe said, "if prosecutor Lowell will telephone a  
lawyer for us. If the prosecutor does it, it'll save time!"

"Anything," Lowell said. "What's the lawyer's name?"

Duffy said, "Have you got something, Joe?"

"I'll know after the Prosecutor makes the phone call," Joe  
said. "Now that name. I can get it out of our files. But maybe I  
can remember it. Let's see. Rand. Hoize. W. Rod? That was it!"

"You'd better use the files," Belden said.

"I've got it now," Joe said. "The name's Colbax Todd."

"What?" Chief Belden said. "He's one of this community's most compe--. What's Todd got to do with this?"

Joe said, "Ask him if he's Mrs. Steven's client. Ask him if he recently drew up a will for her in which Thelma and I were her principal beneficiaries. Get the amount."

Chief Belden said, "I'll do it. But I know Todd will say he has to consult his client before he can--"

Jeffy interrupted. "She's somewhere in Waldwood Hospital. Or was. By now, she may be dead."

"Oh," Belden said. "Then Todd--. I'll 'phone him."

Belden exclaimed, "This may add up!"

Belden went to the Chief's office and picked up a telephone. When he dialed the instrument, he said, "Todd's client died about five hours ago. She left the Farmer an outright bequest of fifty thousand dollars."

"Okay, Joe," Belden said. "There's plenty of motive. Now what?"

Joe said, "Well, I think we ought to pull a couple of rats. Simultaneously. And right away."

"Right away," Belden said. "Why not?"

Joe, Belden and Jeffy got in the main car. Joe looked at his wrist-watch. It was 6:45 P. M. The last shades of night were blowing out of the sky and the city was fast inhaling its sleep for another day of toil and turmoil. The car, followed by a stream of similar vehicles, left Headquarters. There was an absence of sirens.

"I've been watching you, Joe," Chief Belden said. "I think that's

things' made you mad?"

Joe didn't say anything.

The police drove a sledge into the lot and the sledge was  
 at the mill end. It was not at all a heavy one. The  
 community is only there no there. But it is not at all a  
 area.

Duffy said, "we're traveling Hickle Street now. . . & 're almost there"

"The other calling card, according to you, is, 'I am more likely to find Turner than we are' Belden said.

"That's about right," Duffy said. "So I'll cover the job. As soon as we break in at our end of the job, I'll get the Lieutenant at the other job."

The squad car stopped, and the officer said, "This is the store"

The front of the building, where they had torched and burnt, was so vital to make it resemble a combination of a temple, a theater, a church, a mosque, a miniature cathedral.

Duffy said, "Give the guy a couple of seconds to get it."

"Pretty early," Selden said. "So the door's probably locked."

"There's a bell!" Joe said.

"Do you think he'll try and start a meth net, Joe?" Baldwin said.

"I hope so" Joe told him.

'Ye, keep your head,' Bellen said, "no matter how mad--"

Duffy said, "This is it. Let's go!"

JOE HUNG THE BALL. A light brown skin woman opened the door, cringed who the visitors were, and registered fear.

"Take it easy, sister," Juffy told her. "How many 'phones in

this place?"

"One," the woman said. "In the office."

"Where's Hamid?" Belden asked her.

"In the office," the woman replied.

"Take us there," Belden said.

The woman led them through a small darkened auditorium, opened a door. They pushed her in before them, closed the door behind. A man was sitting at a desk. There was a telephone on the desk.

Belden said, "Are you Prophet Hamid?"

The man stood up. He was very short and very slim. His skin was a freckled saddle-yellow. The hair on his head was long, kinky and red. Some of it made a sharp, straight line just under his nose. More of it made a Vandyke on his chin. He was wearing a black cutaway coat with satin lapels, a clerical collar, striped pants, and shiny black shoes with pointed toes. He looked very much like a dressed-up bantam rooster.

Duffy said, "May I please use your 'phone?"

Duffy walked behind the desk and the man walked in front of the desk, facing Belden and Joe. Duffy sat down in the man's chair and reached for the 'phone.

"You're up early this morning," Belden said.

"We've an eight o'clock morning service," the man said. "We always have an early service on Saturday morning."

"That used to be," Belden said. "That was in the past."

"What do you mean?" the man said. "Just who are you?"

"The police," Joe said.

"You can't come in here like this," the man said. "This is a holy place. I'm a holy man!"

"Shut up!" Belden told him.

For a while nobody said anything. The light brown skin woman breathed hard. That was the only sound in the room for several minutes. Then there was a knock on the door.

Duffy said, "Come in!"

A detective opened the door, said, "We've combed the place. Upstairs, the cellar. We didn't find him!"

"Okay", Belden said, waving the detective back out of the door.

Duffy dialed a number, listened; said, "Lieutenant? Inspector Duffy?"

When Duffy cradled the 'phone, Belden said, "Well?"

"He's over in the Mattox Hotel", Duffy said. "So Joe was right. He was right--straight down the line. They found the old man in one of the rooms, three of his fingers cut off. The woman that runs the place--Big Rose--is talking"

Belden said, "Okay, Hamid. Now you know pretty damn well what we're here for. You want to talk?"

Hamid said, "All I'm going to say is this: Get out of here!"

Joe walked over to the man and slapped his face.

Belden said, "Hamid, Detective Hill is awful sore at you. If I were in your place, I'd talk. Hill might lose his head"

Duffy said, "Yeah. It was Detective Hill who got on to you, Hamid. He did a hell of a swell job--taking a little piece from here, a bit from there. He put things together nicely. It added up to you"

Belden said, "You see, Hamid, it was this way. The Quintet Bandits got picked up by us. Hill here questioned one of 'em named Albert Johnson. He's a pretty dumb guy, Johnson is. Not as smart as you are. You ran into him in the Hotel Mattox. He told you the woman he was working for, a Mrs. Stevens, was dying

from cancer?"

"Yeah? Duffy said. "Johnson told you about him witnessing Mrs. Stevens' will and that she was leaving Tom and Grace Turner some money. Well, the Turners were members of your cult. Just why'd you have 'em in your cult anyhow?"

Joe said, "For their insurance policies. That's his racket. He and his kind never bother with people unless they're old and stupid and frustrated by Jim Crow and--"

"Unless they have a couple of insurance policies, huh?" Belden said.

"Stop crowding me!" Hamid told Joe. "Move back--away from me!"

Joe moved closer to the man, and Hamid pushed him.

"Don't let that little bum push you around like that, Joe!" Duffy said.

"Quit pushing Detective Hill!" Belden said. "Quit it!"

Joe's right shoulder moved suddenly. His right fist smashed hard against Hamid's mouth. The man fell on the floor, blood gushing out of his mouth.

Duffy said, "That's enough, Joe. Cut it out now!"

Belden said, "Hamid, how's about a few words now?"

The man rolled over, sat up; said, "Johnson didn't know what I was going to do--what I was--"

Duffy said, "A little kid--the Turner's grand-daughter--came to the police. You don't let little children join your cult, do you?"

"Another thing," Belden said. "Mrs. Stevens is dead!"

Duffy said, "According to the County Prosecutor, the courts will declare old man Tom Turner incompetent. So the money Mrs.



Stevens left the Turners will eventually go to their granddaughter"

"Oh yes," Belden said. "We didn't tell you about Grace Turner. She's dead. So we're going to try and hang a murder rap on you. That'll be tough to do--since you scared her to death"

Duffy laughed. "Prosecutor Lowell says we can't make a murder rap stick to you. But he pushed the police, not long ago, to do the impossible. Now he's got to do the impossible and stick you with a murder rap"

"Tell me just one thing," Hamid said. "Johnson didn't know. He said he thought it was a thousand dollars. But just how much did Mrs. Stevens leave the Turners?"

Belden said, "Huh! This is funny. You tell him Joe. It'll shock him more than the shock he'll get in the chair"

Joe said, "Fifty thousand dollars"